

***Report from the Kentucky Commissioner of Education  
Stephen L. Pruitt, Ph.D.***

***Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) Meeting  
December 6, 2017***

**Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) and Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) Updates**

**KSB**

Under the direction of Jackie Williams, Kentucky School for the Blind staff is raising instructional expectations and meeting the needs of the “whole child”. Grade level teams are meeting in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to gain a deeper understanding of the standards and how to differentiate for the specific needs of each student. The administration is conducting more walk-throughs and observations than in the past.

The Academic and Behavioral Response to Intervention (ABRI) team from the University of Louisville is focusing on training teachers in tiered interventions for academics. The behavioral needs of students are being addressed through Center on Trauma and Children (CTAC). Many KSB students demonstrate internalizing behaviors from the trauma of vision loss and major surgeries. CTAC is working with teachers to identify the internalizing behaviors, so further counseling can be implemented from therapists. To address the unique instructional needs of students who are blind or have vision loss, all teachers and administrators are required to have a Visually Impaired (VI) teacher certification. Current staff that are not VI certified are enrolled in the VI program at the University of Kentucky.



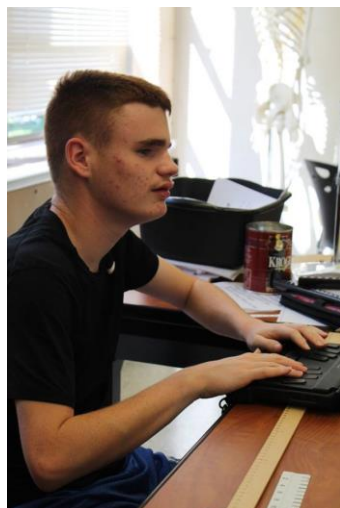
Frog Dissection



Tactile map



Learning Braille



Using a Braille Reader



Goal Ball



Parts of a cell



Integers



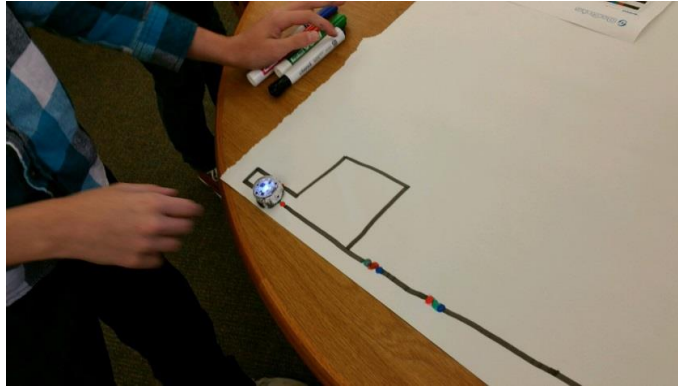
Gardening in the planters students build in the spring



Thankful for KSB

## **KSD**

The Kentucky School for the Deaf staff is continually fine-tuning their strategic plan. Under the new leadership of Toyah Robey, the committees are making positive changes to instruction and culture. Staff are implementing strategies learned under the direction of the Academic and Behavioral Response to Intervention (ABRI) to increase time on task and decrease behavioral issues in the classroom. The Advancing Wellness and Resilience Education (AWARE) grant is assisting teachers in identifying students who need mental health services beyond what the school can offer. Ms. Robey is working to learn American Sign Language (ASL) through classes, attending school activities and communicating with students and staff daily. As she is learning ASL, she has a full-time interpreter with her most days to allow for communication with students and staff who are deaf. Finally, the communication policy is increasing the use and proficiency of all staff and students.



Writing code for Ozobot



Atom Models



PBIS





Learning to Count



Applying Geometry



Teacher Training Pathway



Bus Safety

## **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Updates**

As you know, Kentucky's ESSA Consolidated State Plan was submitted to the United States Department of Education (USED) on September 18, 2017. The plan is currently undergoing a peer review process by other state education leaders from across the country. Once the peer review process is finalized, feedback from the USED will begin. Kentucky's plan has also been reviewed by multiple national external education shareholders, such as the Alliance for Excellent Education, Bellwether Education Partners and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

## **Kentucky Academic Standards Updates**

Work is moving along on the revision of Kentucky's Academic Standards per Senate Bill 1 (2017). Members of math and ELA advisory panels (AP) and review and development committees (RDC) have been selected. A new public comment period allowed for the public's feedback on reviewing the overall alignment and progression of these standards to ensure coherence, rigor and transition-readiness. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) will be scheduling the first round of advisory panels for ELA and math during the beginning or middle of January.

Meanwhile, public comment have been sought on the proposed Health and Physical Education Standards. The standards were last revised in 2006. The final drafts will go before the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) in consideration of adoption later this school year.

Additionally, KDE sought public feedback on the proposed Bible Literacy Standards per House Bill 128 (2017). Feedback was collected through Sunday, December 10.

## **New Skills for Youth Initiative (NSFY) Fall Forum**

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Office of Career and Technical Education hosted a NSFY Fall Forum on Monday, November 27 in Versailles at the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) Office in Versailles. The purpose of the event was to highlight the work underway with the state's first cohort of Regional Career Academy teams and present the state's vision to transform the delivery of Career & Technical Education in Kentucky. Attendees were educated about the NSFY grant initiative, including:

- *how it is designed to help employers, educators, and policymakers strategically align your region's education and workforce pipelines;*
- *how policy and funding levers can be used to improve the quality and rigor of career pathways;*
- *how employer partners and labor market information can drive career pathway decisions at the regional level; and*
- *how Regional Career Academies can be the answer to CTE accessibility to all students in all secondary settings, especially in underserved populations.*

## **Fiscally Challenged Districts**

Each year, the KDE works with local school districts who face fiscal challenges. Historically, the general challenges have been related to a lack of knowledge by new personnel, management issues, or more isolated incidents specific to a community, which could be worked through in a relatively short period of time.

Recently, in addition to the challenges referenced above, the KDE has become more involved with districts that are facing fiscal challenges either directly or indirectly related to decreases in local revenues.

Almost a year ago, local school districts which rely upon unmined coal tax revenue receipts learned that their revenue from this tax would be reduced due to lower property assessments. Fourteen local school districts were impacted by a loss of at least \$100,000. Knott County lost more than \$1 Million. This has affected the eastern Kentucky region primarily.

Local revenues are also being negatively impacted in some local school districts due to lower property assessments overall and lower collection rates of taxes due. Job loss has contributed to the local challenges as families are vacating communities which results in lower average daily attendance of students in the district. Average Daily Attendance is a critical factor in the Support Education Excellence in Kentucky, SEEK – the state’s primary school funding. Some districts are also worried about a possible increase in their utility rates.

Districts impacted have been working with KDE to examine all opportunities for efficiency -- staffing levels, transportation routes, and facilities consolidation. Flexibility in funding has been exercised by districts to the extent legally permissible and contingency balances are being expended. One district has begun this fiscal year with a zero contingency balance.

In addition to the local revenue challenges, all districts will be affected by proposed budget reductions for this fiscal year if imposed. Finally, employer pension contribution rates may increase and add to necessary list of expenditures for all districts.

## **New Kentucky Department of Education KDE Employees:**

### **Office of Continuous Improvement and Support**

- *Matthew Courtney, Education Administration Program Consultant II Division of Consolidated Plans and Audits*

### **Office of Teaching and Learning**

- *Lalah Brewer, Education Administration Program Consultant II Division of Student Success*

- *Verna Rodgers, Administrative Specialist III  
Division of Learning Services*

**KDE Team Member of the Month for December 2017**

- *Jodi Adams, Career Pathways Branch Manager  
Office of Career and Technical Education  
Division of College and Career Readiness*